

## The Midweek Podcast:

Heaven and Earth: Hebrews 9:11-14 | August 4, 2025 | Tony San Nicolas + Mark Watkins

### Tony San Nicolas

Today, I have the honor of going through the scripture found in the ninth chapter of Hebrews, verses 23 to 28. Let's read it.

*<sup>23</sup> Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. <sup>24</sup> For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. <sup>25</sup> Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, <sup>26</sup> for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. <sup>27</sup> And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, <sup>28</sup> so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.*

When I read this passage, I couldn't help but think of the movie National Treasure. You know, that 2004 Disney masterpiece with the one and only Nicolas Cage playing Benjamin Franklin Gates. Yep, that National Treasure.

And spoiler alert, if you haven't seen it yet, even though you had 21 years, part of the premise is that there's a secret message hidden in the Declaration of Independence. And Mr. Ben Franklin Gates needs to steal it from the National Archives. And in order to get away with this, he has to devise and execute a series of impossible tasks. But right as he's about to get away with it, he's almost caught. And thinking quickly, he goes to the gift shop where he buys a souvenir copy of the declaration to replace the real for a copy.

He goes to the cash register and he realizes he doesn't have enough money. And just then another character, Abigail Chase, spots him and demands the document back, not realizing at first that he's holding the real one. And in the scuffle, Ben hands her the souvenir copy. And she is momentarily fooled, allowing Ben to flee with the real declaration. She was fooled by a copy. The real document is priceless, while the souvenir copy is barely worth the cheap paper it's printed on. And the difference is subtle at first glance, but the reality is the difference is astronomical.

The same goes for what we just read in this passage. The difference between the copy of heavenly things made with human hands and the tabernacle versus actual heavenly things is vast. The writer says that these heavenly things require better sacrifices than what was offered in the tabernacle, better sacrifices than the blood of bulls and lambs. And that better sacrifice is our Lord Jesus Christ.

The writer of Hebrews was speaking to a very particular audience, let's remember, Jewish Christians, right? Jewish Christians who were being persecuted and over and over throughout Hebrews, the author was pointing to things of the past in the temple, helping them to recognize that they were mere copies or shadows of who was to come. One could imagine that the former Jewish turned Christian, right? The temptation to return to the copies in exchange for less people trying to kill you might have been a hard thing to ignore.

We can so easily be fooled or distracted by the copies of things just like Abigail Chase was fooled by the souvenir. We can be fooled into thinking that being a good and moral person without submission to Jesus as King is good enough to get into heaven. We can be fooled into thinking that going to church once a week or saying a prayer before dinner is the same as repentance. And I'm not saying that going to church or saying grace are bad things to do. What I'm saying is that we can easily be fooled into thinking that going through the motions is the same thing as being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

And like Dr. Pete spoke on last week, God is interested in your heart. He's interested in spiritual transformation, not the hollow works of our hands. And the good news of the gospel is that there's nothing we can do to earn our salvation. That it's the grace of God through the blood of Jesus that paid the debt that we owe. We don't do anything because Jesus did everything. I heard this from Lee Strobel. He said that most other religions are all about the D.O. It's about what you do to get to heaven. But for Christians, he says, it's all about the D.O.N.E. because it's not about what we do, it's about what Jesus has done. And what he's done is he's died for us and resurrected three days later.

So there are a couple of simple takeaways that I want you to attach your mind to in this podcast. Number one, we can have confidence in our forgiveness and in our salvation. And number two, because of this confidence, we must live with purpose.

So number one, let's get into it. We can have confidence in our salvation. Let me read verses 25 and 26 for us again, and also 28. It says, "Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own. For then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." And

verse 28, "So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him".

Recently, a small part of our staff was tasked with listening to a podcast so we can discuss it together, discuss it together. And in this podcast, the person being interviewed relayed a famous story having to do with righteous judgment, specifically the good and righteous judgment of God. He was relating this heavenly judge and earthly judge. So the story goes like this. There's a judge who is holding court, an earthly judge, and unbeknownst to him, his daughter walks into his courtroom because she's accused of shoplifting. So the evidence is overwhelming, and her father now has to sentence her. If he was an unrighteous judge, he would have said, there's no way I can sentence my own daughter, even though she's clearly guilty. But because he's a righteous judge, he had to sentence her to either 60 days in jail or a \$10,000 fine. So he knew she couldn't afford the fine. So he stepped out from his bench and wrote the check for her. And this, according to the storyteller, is an example of God, the righteous judge. Because God is perfectly righteous, he doesn't ignore our guilt. He rightly sentences us, but instead he pays the price for us. Right? That makes sense. But during our discussion of the podcast, I admitted that I didn't really agree with that illustration. I said, wouldn't it be a better story if the father earthly judge instead went to jail for the daughter for 60 days? Doesn't that illustrate the grace of God more? Doesn't that illustrate what Jesus did? He paid the price for us. He suffered on the cross in our place. Right. And our pastor, Kevin, brought up this very passage that we read this morning. He said, you know, in Hebrews, it says, He didn't offer himself repeatedly as the high priest did in the tabernacle because then he would have to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. He appeared once and for all. So Pastor K pointed out that Jesus paid the price once and he paid it perfectly. He didn't suffer the sentence eternally like he would if you were apart from Christ. No, he hung on the cross once, died once and was resurrected. Why? Because that's what was necessary to pay for our sin.

We don't have to, like the Roman Catholics, re-sacrifice God at every Mass. We rest knowing that Jesus paid it once for all; past, present and future sins. He doesn't have to re-sacrifice himself like the high priest re-sacrificed bulls and lambs and the tabernacle over and over again. Because if those sacrifices were sufficient and perfect, then there would be no need to continue sacrificing. So the confidence we have in our salvation stems from this truth. Jesus' sacrifice was perfect. When Jesus returns, it's not to deal with the sins that occurred after his crucifixion, but like in verse 28 says, "he will return to save those who are eagerly awaiting him." If you ever doubted your salvation, remember that Jesus has already dealt with your sin and that he cares about every part of you, even the parts that we may deem small. Jesus said, even the hairs on your head are numbered.

As a father, I can tell you that I've tried to count the number of hairs on each of my children and some were easier than others. God cares for you and he wants you to have confidence of your salvation because his sacrifice is sufficient and perfect.

And finally, number two, we must live with purpose. Verse twenty seven, let's let me remind you, says, "and just as it is appointed for man to die once and after that comes judgment." So because of the confidence we have in Christ and our salvation, we can live with purpose. And we must understand that our words and our actions have consequences. Jesus said this in Matthew 12. He says, "I tell you on the day of judgment, people will give account for every careless word they speak for by your words, you will be justified and by your words, will be condemned." He was saying that a tree is known by its fruit. If you're a mango tree, you will produce mango fruits. The words you say and the actions you take will be accounted for when Jesus returns for judgment. If you confess that Jesus is Lord, you will be justified. But if you reject him as Lord, you'll be condemned.

This isn't a popular message for modern society. But because of my love for you church, I'm giving it. We live our life and then we die. Death is inescapable. That's what I mean by modern society. We don't like to hear this truth. We know that it's true. We say death and taxes, right? But we don't like to talk about it. But scripture here says after death comes judgment. A lot of people in the world would love to think that after death comes nothing. But we know that we will be judged for what we say and do, because after death comes judgment. Jesus tells us to think about every careless word we speak, because we'll have to give an account for them.

I think we all understand the power that words can have on our soul, that they can have on our psyche. And my question is, are we careful with our words? How many errant or irresponsible or careless words have we said in our lifetime? How many words do we regret that we've said in the last week? So my challenge to you, church, is this live your life with purpose.

I challenge you to identify one person in your life that you're going to speak life into this week. And speaking life can sound so churchy, so "Christianese", but the principles found in scripture Proverbs 18:21 says death and life are in the power of the tongue. And I pray this week that you would speak life into someone you care about. I want you to remember that we are created on purpose and for a purpose, and I pray that your purpose this week is to show the love of Christ through your words. This purpose should be born out of a desire to bring glory to Christ. And this reminds me, I had a conversation with a friend recently about the passage in Numbers 20. As you remember, when Moses was instructed to speak to the rock to give the Israelites water. And we know that Moses sinned and was unable to enter the promised land because not only did he not obey God by speaking to the rock to

bring forth water, but he struck the rock with the staff twice. But more importantly, he sinned because he took God's glory for himself when he asked the Israelites in frustration. "Must we bring you water from this rock?" Like he was the one to do the miracle. Let's not speak life in to your one this week with the desire to puff ourselves up with pride. Let's desire to speak life for the glory of Christ.

So I would love for you to think of your one. I challenge the high school students with this. I challenge them to think of that one person that they wish was a believer in Jesus Christ. And I challenge you this week to speak life into them, to bring God glory by encouraging somebody by letting them know that if they're a believer, they can have assurance of their salvation. And then we need to live with purpose, that the words and the actions that we take are going to be judged. But if we are under the protection of the blood of Jesus, we have nothing to fear.

So think of your one. Who is your one? I'd love for you to tell us about them. Let's pray.

"Loving father, I thank you for this this time just to read through Hebrews. I pray God that the audience, whoever would be listening to this Lord, would be encouraged by the truths that are found in the scripture, Lord, that we can have confidence in your salvation, Lord, that we don't have to worry about the sins that we will commit in the future, Lord, because you paid it once and for all. Father, I pray God, as we think about our one, that we'd be able to speak life into them, Lord, and not death. I pray God that the words that we speak and the actions that we take, Lord, would be careful knowing that you are going to judge them, but also knowing and having confidence that because we are covered by your blood, we are safe. I pray these things in your son Jesus, holy name. Amen."

**Tony San Nicolas + Mark Watkins Discussion (No Transcript Available)**